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SERMON CCCXV.

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HEARERS OF THE GOSPEL IN A SOLEMN SITUATION.

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin."—JOHN XV. 22.

WHEN the venerable Simeon clasped the infant Savior in his arms, he said to Mary, his mother,—“Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against.” In prophetic vision, he looked through the long vista of distant years, saw that to multitudes, in every age, Christ would be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence; that the preaching of his gospel would try the hearts and form the characters of men, and whilst it would be to some the means of raising them to mansions in the skies, it would be to others the means of sinking them low in the world of despair.

The Jews, to whom the words of the text were first addressed, were a people highly favored of God. Blessings innumerable had been lavished upon them. To them were committed the oracles of God. To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. A long succession of prophets had been raised up to declare to them the messages of heaven, and point them in the way of obedience and eternal life. Jehovah, himself, dwelt in the midst of them, as their glory and defence, and shed over their Goshen a heavenly light; whilst all the world around was sunk in the deepest darkness of heathenism. These high and distinguished advantages they had often and greatly abused, and by their abuse of them had incurred great guilt. Yet our Savior declares in the text, that they had not had sin;

that is, their sin had been small, comparatively nothing, if he had not come and spoken to them. Their former privileges, great as they were, dwindled into nothing in comparison with those which they enjoyed in the miracles, the instructions, and perfect example of the great Teacher. Their former light was darkness, compared with the light that shone upon them from the Sun of Righteousness, and consequently their sin, in the abuse of former mercies, was nothing in comparison with that of which they were guilty in making light of Christ and rejecting the claims of his gospel. This was a sin of such deep and peculiar enormity, that Christ, overlooking, as it were, their former sins, fixes upon *this* as the only one which they had ever committed. "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin ; but now they have no cloak for their sin." They had heard Christ preach the gospel, but did not embrace it ; and this greatly enhanced their guilt, and rendered their condition far more alarming than it would otherwise have been. And this is true of all who hear the gospel without cordially embracing it.

The sentiment, then, suggested by the text, and which I desire at this time to impress on your minds, is this :

*When sinners hear the gospel they are in a solemn and critical situation.*

We might give an impressive illustration of this subject by considering the nature of the truths which the gospel contains. They are truths which respect the Almighty God, and the eternal destinies of men. They cannot be rightly contemplated, even by beings not immediately concerned in them, without feelings of the deepest and most solemn interest. Were we mere spectators of the scenes which the gospel unfolds, it would indicate a very bad state of mind, not to be impressed and moved by them.

But we are *not* mere spectators ; we are *actors*, and most deeply interested in the great things revealed in the gospel. The eternal destiny of our souls is at stake. The gospel does not allow us to contemplate its truths without being affected by them. It comes to us from heaven. It comes clothed with heaven's power, to form us vessels of *mercy*, fitted unto glory ; or vessels of *wrath*, fitted unto destruction. It does not make known to us the character of a God with whom we have nothing to do ; it brings us into the presence of that infinite Being whose government is universal ; whose eye is over us in all our ways, and who will treat us in another world according to the character we sustain in this. It does not hold up to our view the spectacle of a lost world as a mere matter of curiosity ; it assures us that we belong to the number of the *lost*, and with them are going to the bar of final judgment. It does not reveal a Savior, on whose person and character we may coldly speculate ; it suspends our immortal happiness on a cordial *reception* of that Savior. It does not simply remove the curtain from the eternal world, and disclose to our view a heaven and a hell, as places of mere fiction ; it assures us that we are going to the eternal world, — that in heaven or in hell we are

to dwell forever, according as we receive or reject its messages of grace. This renders the hearing of the gospel a very serious business. This throws a grandeur and an awe around the services of the sanctuary, that may well bid us beware with what feelings we enter this holy place, and engage in its ministrations. Consequences of everlasting moment are pending ; the work of judgment and of mercy is going on, the effects of which will be as lasting as our being and as solemn as eternity. And it is from a consideration of *these effects* that I wish to show that *hearing the gospel* places sinners in a solemn and critical situation. For,

I. In the first place, it lays them under immediate obligation to embrace it. The gospel is worthy of all acceptance. It is a system of truth which needs only to be understood in order to commend itself to every enlightened conscience. Even those who have been most unwilling to submit to its authority, have been obliged to acknowledge its excellence. The most severe and sceptical examination of it has never been able to detect anything wrong in its doctrines or unreasonable in its precepts.

Now, assuming the fact that men are free moral agents, we say that as soon as they *hear* and *understand* the gospel, they are under obligation to embrace it. A bare knowledge of duty always binds the conscience to a performance of it. So the common sense of men decides. The parent considers his child bound to obey his commands as soon as he understands them. The magistrate regards the laws as binding on the subject as soon as they are published. And God always considers men as under obligation to obey *his* will as soon as it is made known. No allowance is made for indisposition. Whether they have a heart to obey or not, they are under eternal obligation to do what they know is right ; and all *do* know, who have the bible in their hands, that it is right for sinful men to repent and obey the gospel. This is the command of God ; this is the dictate of conscience, and no excuse for delaying obedience can be justified either at the bar of God or of conscience.

I am aware that the want of a disposition, or a right heart, is often urged as an excuse for not obeying the divine commands. But does the parent regard this as absolving his child from obligation to obedience ? or the magistrate the subject ? Admit that unwillingness, or the want of a right temper of mind, frees men from their obligations to obey, and you put an end to all government and to all restraint. The sensualist could plead it, and indulge without remorse or fear of punishment, the vilest passions. The thief and the assassin could plead it, and range unrestrained through your streets in quest of plunder and of blood. The fact is, obligation to obedience depends on a knowledge of duty, and *not* in the least on a disposition to perform it. Accordingly the apostle declares, that to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin. To know our duty is to be under obligation to do it. There is not in the wide universe an exception to this rule. The moment the Lord Jesus speaks, there is

no longer any cloak for sin. The moment the commands of God are known, they are binding. Publish the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself;" and it instantly becomes obligatory on every one that hears it. Publish the command, "Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;" and every sinner is laid under obligation to repent and accept the Savior. Propose the terms of mercy revealed in the gospel, and all are bound, by obligations from which they can never escape, immediately to embrace them.

2. Hearing the gospel places sinners in a solemn and critical situation, because it renders it necessary for them either to *receive* or to *reject* it. When the child knows the will of its parent, he must obey or disobey. And when sinners know what God requires of them, they must be either willing or unwilling to yield obedience. There is no middle course. The commands of their Sovereign are made known; they understand them, and now the only alternative is, either to obey or disobey. There is no possibility of assuming neutral ground. They are forced to a stand, and must either submit to, or rebel against the acknowledged authority of God, their Savior. And certainly, than such a situation none more solemn can be conceived, this side the eternal world. Here is an immortal being, a lost sinner, to whom proposals of mercy are made, and the question to be decided is, shall he accede to them and live, or reject them and die; one or the other he must do.

The attitude of indifference or neutrality he cannot take. The command is positive: — Repent, believe, take up the cross, follow Christ. These duties, binding as they are on every living man, as soon as he understands them, demand *feeling, action, effort*. Indifference, then, is disobedience; neglect is transgression. To stand still when the command bids you go forward; to do nothing when God calls you to action, is as truly resistance to his authority, and as distinctly marks you a despiser of his grace, as open defiance or positive rebellion. Here is no room for exemption, none for neutrality. For or against the Savior, the friends or the enemies of Christ, we must be; and whether we will be the one or the other is necessarily decided by us, whenever the proposals of the gospel are proclaimed in our hearing.

3. Hearing the gospel places sinners in a solemn and critical situation, because it is to all who hear it, a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. It always hardens or softens the heart; prepares for heaven, or fits for hell. It is impossible to hear the great truths of the gospel without being essentially affected by them—without receiving impressions that will last forever.

It is a common and just remark, that we are the creatures of habit. We are the pupils of every object around us. The works of creation, the events of providence, our fellow men, our common enjoyments and daily occupations; and above all, the great truths of the bible, are constantly operating to form our characters, and prepare us for our future and everlasting state. Whether these things shall

prepare us for happiness or misery—shall save or destroy us, depends upon the state of our hearts, or upon the use we make of them. The gospel, with its system of instruction and warning, of invitation and mercy, is certainly fitted and designed to save us from our sins, and fashion us for the service and enjoyment of God. And it actually produces this effect on the minds of all who open their hearts to its holy influences, and yield themselves to its transforming power. For we all, says the apostle, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image. But, upon the minds of the carnal and sensual, of the sinful and stupid, of the depraved and the worldly, it produces entirely opposite effects. Instead of melting, it hardens; instead of preparing them for glory, it fits them for destruction. Accustomed to hear, without feeling the truths of the gospel, they form a habit of insensibility and carelessness. Their hearts become hard and unimpressible. Eternal things lose their power to awaken or move them. They have so long heard the accents of mercy and the threatenings of justice, that both are alike indifferent to them. They can neither be won by love, nor alarmed by terror. Year after year they have sat under the light of the gospel, and have had disclosed to them the rewards and the punishments, the joys and the sorrows of an eternity at hand; but the only effect has been to increase their blindness, and make them more heedless of God and careless of their own souls.

Of this fatal apathy and hardness of heart, how many affecting examples do we find in the history of our ruined race? For illustration, I might point you to Chorazin and Bethsaida, to Capernaum and Jerusalem, places exalted to heaven by their privileges; but fitted for, and thrust down to hell, for their abuse of them. I might point you to multitudes in Christian lands, who have, evidently, by a long continued resistance of light and motive, passed themselves into that region of hardness and guilt where the Holy Spirit never interposes to bring to repentance, or fit for heaven. But I come nearer home, and appeal to your own experience. Do not some, who occupy these seats, know full well that the longer they hear the gospel without embracing it, the less they are affected by its truths? Can you not remember the time when eternal things more deeply impressed your minds than they do at present? As Sabbaths, and sacraments, and sermons, and prayers, and exhortations, and warnings, have been multiplying around you, have you not been traveling away from God and holiness; and is there not painful evidence, in respect to some of you, that you are to-day farther from repentance and heaven than ever before?

In this connection, it is important to observe, that in righteous judgment, God often abandons to hardness of heart and blindness of mind, those who abuse the riches of his forbearance and long suffering. Go, says he to his prophet, giving him a commission against his ancient people; go, make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they hear with their ears,



and see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed. In executing this mournful commission, the prophet did nothing but preach. But the truth, falling upon depraved hearts, had the dreadful effect of stupefying and destroying them. This fearful power of divine truth to harden, to seal over to judgment, to hasten and bring it down, is often mentioned in scripture, as if on purpose to warn careless men against trifling with the messages that are sent to them. See, declares God to the prophet, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build up, and to plant. A dreadful instrumentality is here; but it is all embodied in that truth of God which is as the fire and the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. I have hewed them by the prophets, says God, I have slain them by the words of my mouth. In the same strain of solemn warning, the apostle declares that God will send strong delusion upon those men who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness; and the effect will be that they shall believe a lie, and be damned. Ah, my friends, it is a serious business to sit under the preaching of the gospel. Its truths are clothed with mighty power. They heal or they kill all to whom they are sent.

4. One thought more, I must add in illustration of our doctrine. An aggravated condemnation awaits all those who hear without embracing the gospel. He who now governs in mercy has appointed a day when he will judge men in justice. The Savior, whose gospel is now proclaimed in all the fulness of eternal love to a dying world, will one day exchange his throne of grace for a throne of judgment, and before him will be gathered all the tribes of men. Their deeds and their deserts will then pass in solemn review, and life or death eternal to every soul of man, will hang on the awful scrutiny. And of all the multitudes who shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ, none will be burdened with deeper guilt, or fall under a more fearful condemnation, than those who have lived under the light, and abused the grace of the gospel. They will be in the condition of that servant who knew his master's will, but prepared not himself to do it, and was therefore worthy to be beaten with many stripes. They will be found to have resisted great light and abused great mercies; and to have passed on to perdition over the ten thousand obstacles which the goodness and forbearance of God have thrown in their way. They were warned, they were invited, they were commanded, they were threatened, but all in vain. The only effect was to stupefy and harden. They were fitted for destruction by the abundance of divine goodness — prepared for ruin by the mercies of God; and when they shall appear at the judgment, a holy universe will approve the sentence that shall cause them to sink far below Chorazin and Bethsaida, Tyre and Sidon, in the world of everlasting punishment.

In reflecting upon the preceding discourse, we cannot forbear to notice, 1. How full of meaning is that question of the apostle —

"Who is sufficient for these things?" He had been speaking of the opposite effects produced by the preaching of the gospel. "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one, we are a savor of life unto life; and to the other, a savor of death unto death; and who is sufficient for these things?" The apostle's eye was open full on the momentous results of his ministry. He looked beyond the transient scenes of time to the eternal consequences pending on his labors; and he felt that it is indeed a most serious business to be employed in fitting men for their future and everlasting state. And it is this view of the sacred office which must always most deeply affect every faithful minister of Christ. His aim is the salvation of his hearers. His heart is fixed on presenting every one of them perfect in Christ Jesus, on the great day of his coming. For this he studies and preaches; for this he labors and prays. But in respect to many of his hearers, he labors in vain, and spends his strength for nought. After having made his best preparations — after having selected, with anxious thought and prayerful attention, truths which he judges best adapted to awaken the conscience and draw the sinner from his dangerous ways, he comes before his hearers to deliver his message, under the painful, heart sinking impression that to some of them it will be a savor of death unto death; the means of throwing them into a deeper sleep, and of fitting them for an aggravated condemnation. Here is work that might well make an angel tremble. It is for eternity. The effects of every faithful christian sermon will be felt forever. This makes preaching a serious business. This spreads an air of sacred awe around the pulpit, and inscribes on the doors and walls of the sanctuary — "How dreadful is this place!"

2. It is an obvious inference from the preceding discourse, that sinners have no excuse for not embracing the gospel. There are, indeed, many excuses which they are wont to urge for neglecting this duty. They plead their farms and their merchandise, their worldly engagements and worldly connections. They even resort to the bible, and attempt to draw something from that to justify their disobedience to its plain and positive commands. They plead the purposes of God, the depravity of the heart, the nature of regeneration, the power of temptation, and their inability to do what God requires of them, — to palliate or excuse their impenitence and unbelief.

Not to say that those who urge these doctrines in excuse for sin, are generally inconsistent with themselves, — alleging the divine purposes as an excuse for not obeying the gospel, when they do not believe in the divine purposes; pleading their inability, and yet displeased when told of their inability; seeking an apology for transgression in that very depravity which they deny to exist: not to insist upon this strange contradiction of ideas, — this palpable inconsistency between their sentiments and their conduct; it appears from this discourse that these and all other excuses which they can offer for neglecting their duty are entirely groundless. For if they could

offer any good excuse for not obeying the gospel, their hearing the gospel could lay them under no obligation to embrace it. A man can never be under obligation to do what he has a good excuse for not doing. This is a self evident truth, and of universal application. Every one, therefore, who acknowledges that sinners ought to love God, that they are bound to repent, believe in Christ, and obey the gospel, must acknowledge that they have no excuse for neglecting these duties. Obligation excludes excuse. Where the one begins the other ends. They can never exist together. Now has it not been shown that hearing the gospel does oblige sinners to embrace it? that a bare knowledge of duty always imposes an obligation to perform it? Is not this a dictate of conscience? Is it not agreeable to reason and the common sense of mankind? And more than all, is it not declared and sustained by the testimony of God himself? Away, then, with excuses. The commands of God exclude them; conscience condemns them; they are the suggestion of a wicked heart; they ruin the soul. Obligation is fixed on all who hear and understand the gospel, immediately to yield to it a cordial obedience; and for delay of such obedience no living man has the least valid excuse. So it will appear on the day of final account. Every mouth will then be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God. For the coming of that day let one and all be prepared; and the only preparation, dear hearer, which will then avail you, is a hearty renunciation of all excuses for impenitence, and an humble acceptance of the mercy offered you in the gospel.

3. If hearing the gospel renders it necessary for sinners either to receive or reject it, then it is vain for them to suppose that they can take neutral ground. There are thousands who mean to take such ground. They regard religion as, on the whole, a good thing, and are willing that others should attend to it; but *they* do not intend to pay much attention to it themselves. Open opposition to the gospel they consider as very criminal, and they mean themselves to treat it with respect. But they do not mean to embrace it by a true and living faith, and yield to it the obedience of a devoted christian life. They think themselves safe if they do not oppose the gospel; and this they mean to avoid. Hence they attend public worship, hear respectfully the preaching of the word, often commend a plain and faithful exhibition of the gospel; but here they stop. They do not mean to be devoted christians; nor do they mean to be sinners, but to take neutral ground, and be neither for nor against Christ; neither gathering with him nor scattering abroad. But there is no such ground: *no, my friends, not in the universe.* The moment you know what God is, you must love or hate.\* The moment you hear the command, Repent, believe, you must obey or disobey. The precepts of the gospel coming home to the understanding, *fix* obligation, and constrain every living man to take sides; to rank himself either with the friends or with the enemies of God. Accordingly, the scriptures divide men into two classes; and from Genesis to Revelation, say not a



word of a *third* class. They are saints or sinners, friends or enemies, travelers in the broad way or in the narrow way, heirs of life or children of perdition. This distinction now divides this audience, and marks every person present either for or against Christ. If the judgment were *now* set, and the books opened, all who are here in these seats would move off either to the right hand or to the left of the Judge; all would be approved as friends, or condemned as enemies. Not an individual would be exempted. And this distinction which now runs through and divides this assembly and all mankind into two classes, will be growing wider and wider to all eternity. It will be recognized at the judgment day, and form the ground of the eternal separation that will then be made between the righteous and the wicked, and it will then run on widening and widening during eternal ages. See to it, my friends, that you then be found not on the left hand of the Judge. Take now the stand of friendship to God. Be what duty demands, and what alone can save you from ruin—the open, decided followers of the Redeemer.

4. If hearing the gospel lays sinners under immediate obligation to embrace it, then it is unavailing for them to determine after having heard it, that they will hear it no more. It is not uncommon for them to make this determination. When they are told that the preaching of the gospel is to the wicked a savor of death unto death, and that attendance on the means of grace with wrong feelings will only fit them for destruction, they are often displeased, and resolve that they will hear the gospel no longer. But such a determination can avail them nothing; for their obligation is *fixed*, and fixed forever. Having learned what God is, and what he requires of them, they are laid under everlasting obligation to serve and obey him; an obligation that will lie upon them at all times and in all circumstances, and from which they can never escape. It will abide upon them through life, at death, and forever. What then, if, displeased with the truth of God, they retire from the house of God, and determine to close their ears against the sound of the gospel? What though they never open their bibles again, and never hear another sermon as long as they live? Their obligation remains the same. Having once known their Master's will, it is too late to think of freeing themselves from an obligation to do it. If, my friends, you could efface from your memories all recollection of the past; if you could forget there is a God, and annihilate all knowledge of duty; if you could reduce yourselves to idiocy, and stop the sounding of the fearful word, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned," then might you escape from the obligation that binds you to love and serve your great and glorious Creator. But till you can do this, never think that neglecting the means of grace, or turning away from the preaching of the gospel, will dissolve your obligation to God. Whether neglecting the means of grace, or attending upon them in a sinful, sluggish state of mind, is most offensive in the sight of God, I pretend not to say; but one thing I may say, doing either is inevita-

ble ruin to the soul. And since either course ends in destruction, it is of little consequence to know which will carry you there soonest. God has not given us scales to weigh sin in. He forbids it in every shape, whether committed by attending on the means of grace with wrong feelings, or by an entire neglect of them. He requires the hearts of his creatures, and can accept of nothing short.

Choose the way, then, that eternal wisdom marks out ; repent, believe, give your hearts to God, and reap the everlasting rewards of obedience. This is the only path to heaven ; every other leads down to the regions of despair. Linger no longer on the field of death ; trifle no longer with the calls of eternal love ; dream no longer over the concerns of your salvation. Life is passing away ; the precious hours of mercy are on the wing ; to-day God waits to be gracious ; to-morrow he may call you to your last account. Look then to his throne of grace ; look, and your souls shall live.

But if you will yet delay ; yet procrastinate the great work of preparation, and treat as a thing of nought the invitations and warnings of the gospel, then know for a certainty, that every day you live, you are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds.

## SERMON CCCXVI.

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By WM. R. DE WITT,

HARRISBURG, PA.

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### A PRAYER FOR ZION.

"GIVE ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock : thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin, and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."  
PSALM LXXX. 1, 2, 3.

THERE have been many conjectures respecting the author of this psalm, the time in which it was written, and the events to which it refers. On all these subjects the learned have differed among themselves. Without detaining you with their various opinions, the arguments adduced in support of each, and with what appears to our own view as most probable, it will be sufficient, for all purposes of useful instruction, to remark, that this psalm must have been written long after the establishment of the church in the land of Canaan, and at a period when it was suffering great adversity. Under the emblem of a vine, the church is represented as having taken deep root in that land, having extended its boughs to the sea, and its branches to the river ; so that the hills were covered with the shadow of it, and its boughs were like the goodly cedars. But God, in judgment, had withdrawn his protection from his vineyard, and had broken down its hedges. Thus exposed, the enemy had invaded, and was laying

waste this beautiful heritage. Fire was destroying its verdure, the boar from the wood was wasting, and the wild beast of the field was devouring it. Under these circumstances the pious psalmist repairs to the throne of God, and earnestly entreats him to look down from heaven, to behold and visit this vine, which he had himself planted, recover it from its desolations, and again, in mercy, extend to it his wonted regard and protection. Such is the general import of the prayer contained in the text. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock: thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

To a brief exposition of this passage, and the practical instruction it suggests, your attention is now invited. In our exposition we shall first advert to the titles and designations given to the object of prayer, and then to the petitions themselves.

I. The psalmist addresses the object of his supplications as the Shepherd of Israel. "O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock." The pastoral life prevailed to a great extent in the earlier ages of the world, and particularly in the eastern countries. Flocks and herds constituted the principal wealth of the inhabitants, and to protect and feed them, were among the most honorable employments of life. The leisure and retirement it afforded, amid the luxuriant and beautiful scenes of nature by day, and the opportunity it furnished of contemplating the grandeur and magnificence of the nocturnal heavens, rendered it the chosen employment of the studious and meditative. The scenes and employments of pastoral life have furnished the sacred penmen with some of their most happy and striking illustrations. The Holy Spirit early chose this emblem to express the love, the watchfulness and the care, which the great Redeemer exercises towards his people, and which he will never intermit until he has brought them safe to heaven. The patriarch Jacob, at the close of his eventful life, in the prophetic blessing pronounced upon his offspring, alluded to the Author of their mercies, and the rock of their salvation, as the Shepherd of Israel. David recognizes him as such, and rejoices in the assurance of his provident and protecting care. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." The prophet Isaiah predicts the advent of the Messiah, as a tender and faithful shepherd, who should "gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom." In accordance with these ancient representations, our Lord, during his personal ministry, spoke of himself as "the Shepherd, the good Shepherd, who giveth his life for his sheep." We cannot then mistake the reference of this title,

in this psalm. When the psalmist addresses his prayer to the Shepherd of Israel, he supplicates the interposition of Jehovah Jesus, the guide, the support, and the protector of his church in every age.

"Thou that ledest Joseph like a flock."—The whole community of Israel is sometimes denoted by the name of one tribe. Joseph was the beloved son of Jacob, and the father of Ephraim and Manasseh. His life had been the object of God's special care, and had called forth the most remarkable interpositions of his providence. The name Joseph, is associated with the most tender expressions of God's regard for his church; and the suppliant introduces this name in his prayer, probably to awaken, by recalling these associations, the sympathy of the Almighty Shepherd of Israel, for his wandering, yet deeply afflicted flock. The shepherd always preceded the sheep. They knew his voice; exercised unbounded confidence in his wisdom, power, and kindness. They felt themselves safe under his guidance and protection; and wherever he led they followed. Thus the Shepherd of Israel had led Joseph like a flock from Egyptian bondage, through the wilderness, to the promised land. He went before his people, directing their footsteps, subduing their enemies, and removing the obstacles out of their way, until they were put in possession of the promised land. Encouraged by these recorded instances of his faithfulness and mercy, the psalmist, now, when the desolations of Zion required his gracious interposition, reminds him of his acknowledged relationship, as the Shepherd of Israel, and earnestly supplicates his interference on her behalf.

"Thou that dwellest between the cherubims."—There is an allusion here to the mysterious manifestations of God's presence in the holy of holies, under the law. In that consecrated place the ark of the covenant was deposited. Its lid, or covering, was the mercy seat, surmounted by two cherubs, with their wings stretched out toward each other, forming a throne, as it were, upon which rested the mysterious symbol of the divine presence. It is in reference to this symbol that the psalmist addresses God, as he who dwells between the cherubims. The mercy seat was the type of the efficacy of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice for sin. In Heb. 9. 5, it is called "*hilasterion*," the propitiation; and of Christ it is said, Rom. 3. 25, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, (*hilasterion*,) through faith in his blood. He interposes between the throne of God, as the almighty guardian of righteousness, and his holy law; and by sustaining its honor and satisfying its claims, he averts its fearful curse from those who trust in his grace. It is to God as seated upon the throne of mercy, and having respect to the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, that the psalmist looks. It is his gracious interposition that he so earnestly seeks.

Let us turn our attention, for a moment, to the petitions addressed to this great and gracious God.



"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel."—Zion was apparently forsaken, and her enemies triumphed. Her Redeemer seemed regardless of her desolations, and inattentive to the voice of her prayer. She had deserved this rebuke, even though in anger he had shut up his tender mercies, and would be favorable no more. Yet her only hope was in that God against whom she had sinned. Should he cast her off, her desolations would indeed be perpetual, her ruin irremediable. Hence the pious suppliant betakes himself to God, and earnestly entreats him to "give ear"—to deign once more to listen to the voice of prayer in behalf of the people whom he had chosen, redeemed, and called after his own name. He presses his suit, by referring to the gracious relationship to his people, as their Shepherd, which he had himself acknowledged, and to the recorded instances of his pastoral regard for them.

"Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth."—It was a day of clouds, and gloom, and storm, to the church. The tempest had swept over the heritage of God, and all was waste and desolate. This ruin must remain unimpaired, unless God her Redeemer, who dwelt between the cherubims, would shine forth in the splendor of his power, truth, and love, hush this angry tempest, dissipate these gloomy clouds, and revive and bless his prostrate heritage. It is to God, as propitious to the sinful and guilty, through the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that the pious suppliant addresses his prayer, and connects in his petition, (doubtless as a reason why it should prevail), the manifestations of the divine glory with the object he so earnestly sought. "Shine forth"—let thy glory be manifested in the salvation of thy church.

"Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us."—The reason why these tribes are particularly designated in this connection, is not obvious. In the order prescribed for the march of the twelve tribes through the wilderness, these three followed immediately after the ark of the covenant, and the cherubims that overshadowed the mercy seat. Some have supposed that it is in reference to this fact, that these tribes are here designated. It is, however, the more probable supposition, that their names are used for the whole commonwealth of Israel, in whose presence the psalmist desires God to arise, and exercise his power for the salvation of his church. The suppliant feels that if Zion is ever recovered from her desolations, it is God that must effect it. No human power, no combination of created strength would avail; and, therefore, he earnestly entreats her Almighty Redeemer to arise, in the power of his might, in the presence of his church, and hasten to her deliverance.

"Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved."—They had departed from God, grievously departed from him; and though the obligation to return to him from whom they had revolted, was deeply felt, yet helpless in their guilt

and ruin, they lay at the footstool of sovereign mercy, and on God alone was their dependence, even for that spirit of deep repentance, without which they could not hope for his blessing. Hence the suppliant beseeches God to turn them — to bring them, by his Spirit, with broken and contrite hearts, to himself and to the pathway of holy obedience to his will. “And cause thy face to shine upon us.” — The face of God here denotes his favor, — his loving kindness; and the shining of that face, its gracious manifestations. This the suppliant sought in behalf of Zion. And when God should turn her from her iniquities, and should manifest his loving kindness to her, then would she be recovered from her desolations, restored to her former beauty and glory, and rejoice in his salvation.

II. Having thus briefly unfolded the import of the passage, we proceed to consider some of the practical instructions suggested by it.

1. We learn from this portion of God's word, that the interests of Zion lie very near the hearts of God's people. The whole of this psalm, as well as the part under consideration, furnishes abundant evidence of this. Not a petition escapes the lips of the suppliant for himself, individually. All his thoughts and desires were absorbed in the afflictions and desolations of Zion. Over these he wept, while for her he poured forth his earnest prayer. Numerous instances of the same devotedness to Zion's welfare are recorded in the sacred scriptures. Moses, that honored servant of God, on more occasions than one, showed how intensely he felt for the welfare of the church, and of what little importance he esteemed everything else in comparison with her salvation, as connected with the glory of God. In one instance he implored God to blot his own name from his book, rather than withhold his blessing from his people. The aged Eli could hear, with comparative composure, of the defeat of the armies of Israel, and the death of his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, while his heart trembled for the ark of God, the symbol of his gracious presence among his people; and when he heard that that had fallen into the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines, we are told that the shock to his pious mind was such as to overcome his strength, and he fell backward and gave up the ghost. Nehemiah, though the favorite of the Persian monarch, and surrounded by the luxury of an eastern court, when he heard that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, and the gates thereof burnt with fire, and the remnant left of the captivity, in great affliction, sat down and wept and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the Lord of heaven. When inquired of by the king, why his countenance was sad, he replied: “Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates are consumed by fire?” The pious captives, as they sat by the rivers of Babylon, their harps all un-

strung and hung upon the willows, wept when they thought of Zion, and expressed their regard for Jerusalem in strains of most impassioned feeling : — “ If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth ; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.” The prophet Jeremiah lived at a period when the church of God was suffering severe judgments, and threatened with others more so. The condition of Zion produced such constant sorrow in his mind, that he has been called the weeping prophet. And, yet, as though his tears were insufficient to express his grief, we hear him exclaim : “ O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people !” It was this strong, abiding affection for the church of God, that led the apostles and primitive disciples of the Redeemer to such constant prayer, and such unceasing, laborious, and self sacrificing efforts in her behalf. Every period of Zion’s deliverance has been distinguished by those who have most deeply sympathized with her in her afflictions, who have felt the burden of her woes, and whose prayers have continued to ascend for her prosperity. This is the spirit of Christ himself, who loved his church, and gave himself for it, an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling savor ; who rose from the dead, and lives and reigns to consummate the purposes of infinite goodness in relation to her.

Nor is it difficult to justify this strong affection, on the part of God’s people, for his Zion. It is their distinguishing characteristic to love God supremely, and to delight in the manifestations of his excellence. In the exercise of those devout affections, which sprung up in their bosom in the contemplation of this excellence, their happiness is principally found. The manifestation of his own glory is the end of God in all he does. For this he laid the foundation of the earth, and stretched abroad the curtains of the heavens. For this he garnished the one with all its beauty, and arrayed the other in such magnificence and splendor. For this he walks forth in his providence, sometimes clothed in the dark majesty of his punitive justice, but more frequently enrobed in the glory of his beneficence, strewing around him, with lavish hand, the blessings of his goodness. In the displays of his glory he fills his holy universe with blessedness, — he sends the tide of rapturous joy through the bosoms of his holy, intelligent creation. The glory of God is the light and blessedness of heaven. To see it dimmed would shade the brow of the seraph with gloom, and cause his harp to fall tuneless from his hands. It is in consequence of her being so directly associated with the manifestations of God’s glory, that Zion is invested with such deep interest in the mind, and has such a strong hold on the affections of every Christian. It is a vine which his own right hand has planted, that he may be glorified. When God was deprived, in consequence of the fall of man, of that glory which he designed to secure by the first creation, he introduced a new

creation which should be forever to the praise of the glory of his grace. This new creation he is now carrying forward to its ultimate consummation. It is the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, embracing the church of the living God, which he has purchased with his blood. Here the brightest manifestations of God's glory are made, the universe ever beheld. The developments and consummation of God's plan of mercy, through Jesus Christ, will fill his holy kingdom with the most perfect and enduring bliss. The Christian, then, who loves God supremely, and finds his purest and highest enjoyment in the exercise of those holy and devout affections which spring from the contemplation of his glory, cannot be indifferent to the prosperity or adversity of Zion. When Zion prospers ;— when rebellious men, the victims of depravity and guilt, bow, in sweet submission, to the sceptre of the Savior, and become his holy servants, and the heirs of eternal life ;— when multitudes of joyful worshipers crowd the gates of Zion ;— when her children, adorned with the beauties of holiness, and walking in the light of God's countenance, endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, then God is glorified, the hearts of his people are made glad, and all heaven rejoices.— But when Zion is led captive by her enemies ; when the daughter of Jerusalem sits solitary on her ruined walls, and the songs of her children are heard no more ; when divisions and contentions mar her beauty and weaken her influence, and the spirit of violence and discord rupture bonds that God holds sacred, then the hearts of those that love her are filled with sorrow, and surrounding the throne of grace, they implore the almighty and gracious interposition of her Redeemer. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock: Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

The welfare of mankind, as well as the glory of God, is intimately associated with the prosperity of Zion ; and for this reason the children of God feel a deep interest in her advancement. We are incapable of estimating how much human society is indebted to the indirect influence of the church of God, wherever it is established. The light which revelation has thrown upon the rights, the privileges, and the duties of men, as members of the same great family ; the restraints which the institutions of religion have imposed on the depravity of the human heart, and the influence which they have exerted in promoting the intelligence of men, in cultivating their social affections, and in promoting the love of order and peace in society, are widely felt in advancing our social happiness. But the eternal salvation of men is of infinitely greater importance than their temporal well being. The ordinary means of that salvation are all with the church of God. Here are deposited the holy scriptures. Here is established the ministry of reconciliation, and here are appointed all

those ordinances which God has proposed to make effectual to salvation. When Zion prospers—when God smiles upon her, and the blessing of heaven descends upon her institutions and ordinances, her influence on the surrounding community is most beneficial, while multitudes are born into the kingdom of God and rejoice in his salvation. In addition to this, there are other considerations which induce the Christian to regard the church of God with strong affection. Through her ministrations he has been brought himself to rejoice in God's salvation. In waiting on her ordinances, he has enjoyed communion with his Redeemer, and the foretastes of his eternal rest. Here he has been associated with the friends of Christ, in advancing his kingdom; in the trials, and labors, and anxieties, as well as in the joys of the gospel. All his dearest interests are associated with the church of Christ. One thing does he desire of the Lord, and that will he seek after, that he may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. By means of the ordinances of his house, he hopes to be built up in knowledge and holiness, and prepared for the purer joys, and holier worship of the church above. We see then what ample cause the Christian has for his ardent attachment to the church of God, and his deep interest in her welfare. With the prosperity of that church, the glory of God, the welfare of man, and his own hopes and happiness are inseparably associated.

2. We further learn from this passage of scripture, that in the season of Zion's adversity the saint's resort is to God in prayer. As we have before remarked, no human power, no array of created strength, can recover Zion from her desolations, restore her to her wonted beauty and glory, and cause her influence to go forth for the salvation of the world. "Truly, in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains. Truly, in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel." With this truth the people of God have been deeply impressed in every age of the world, and have gonedirectly to his throne, and implored his almighty and gracious interference. They have had every encouragement to do so. It is the revealed purpose of God that his church shall continue, prevail over all opposition, rise superior to all her enemies, and fill the world with her glory. The purposes of God respecting this lower world, and the events which are here to transpire, are all inseparably associated with the final triumph and advancement of his church. This is the consummation of his plan—the end of his providence. His people, therefore, seek but the accomplishment of the divine purpose, when in the season of Zion's adversity they resort to God in prayer, and implore his interposition on her behalf. They are further encouraged to do this, by the fact that Jesus Christ is now in heaven, seated upon his mediatorial throne, exalted far above principalities and powers, dominion, and every name that is named; that he rules supreme over



all, and is constituted head over all things to his church. His eye is ever watchful, and his arm never grows weary. That watchful eye and that almighty arm, are directed by a heart that glows with infinite, eternal love to his church. "I have loved thee," (it is his own declaration,) "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." When the Savior would express the strength of his attachment for his people, he searches in vain for a comparison among human or angelic affections. An adequate illustration could only be found in the love which exists between the persons in the Godhead: As the Father hath loved me, EVEN so have I loved you. Such is the affection of Jesus for his church. This affection now reigns in his heart as he sits enthroned in glory. And ought it not to inspire us with confidence in addressing his throne on Zion's behalf? Hear how he himself chides the unbelief of his desponding people: "Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold! I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands. Thy walls are continually before me." There may be much to discourage in the condition of the church, and in the aspect of divine providence. A dark cloud may hang over Zion. The heritage of Zion may be desolate. Division and discord and violence may prevail. But Jesus lives. The great Redeemer reigns. His promise is pledged for her enlargement, and his power is able to redeem all that he has promised. With such encouragement, every Christian should, with meek and fervent prayer, implore the blessing of God on his church.

3. From the passage under consideration we learn, that the Christian does not hope for the blessing of God to descend upon his church, without deep repentance on the part of his children, and their return to the path of duty. God never withdraws his protection and blessing from his church, without some adequate reason. "Behold," says the prophet, addressing Zion, "Behold! the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you." Such has always been the case. The judgments which befall Zion may always be traced to her iniquities, as their cause. It would be presumption to expect that God would restore his favor while she remained impenitent. But how shall her repentance be secured? How shall her children be brought, humbled and broken hearted, to the throne of God, imploring his forgiveness, and the return of his favor? There is no question about their obligation and their duty. But while these should be urged and pressed with importunity, we never should forget our dependence upon the spirit of God, to convince even the professed followers of Jesus Christ of their sin, and to bring them penitent to the

foot of the cross. How often are Christians, and even ministers of the gospel, deceived, in regard to their own feelings and actions. How often, especially in times of excitement and contention, is a carnal policy, which God abhors, mistaken for Christian wisdom and prudence; unholy violence, and bitter denunciations, for zeal for God's truth and worship; and a disregard for the most sacred rights justified on the ground that the glory of God and the welfare of the church demanded it. And when the excitement passes away, and judgment and conscience begin to react, how difficult for men then to yield to the conviction of their sin, and be willing to confess it before God, and seek his forgiveness. But it will not answer for Christians and ministers to cover over their sins, and then hope that God will forget them. An unwillingness to submit to the humiliating confession of some sin, has often closed the kingdom of heaven against the sinner, and withheld the blessing from the church of God. The church now needs that outpouring of the Holy Spirit which shall convince all her members of their sins, take from them the spirit of self justification, break their hearts with ingenuous sorrow, and humble them in the dust before the throne of God. Then will he cause his face to shine, and they shall be saved. He will redeem his own promise: "I will heal their backslidings. I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from them. I will be as the dew unto Israel. He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." The church does not require the aid of wealth or worldly influence to achieve her benign and holy triumphs over the depravity and wretchedness of man. She is most powerful when, possessing the least of these, she enjoys most of the presence and blessing of her Divine Head; when her members are all united in the bonds of holy love; when they are all animated by the single desire to glorify God and advance his cause; when deeply conscious of her dependence on God, they humbly and unitedly seek him in prayer, but at the same time are actively engaged in doing what he requires; when the beauties of holiness adorn their lives, and the pure, humble, heavenly spirit of Christ breathes its sweetness into all their actions. Then the church "looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

Christian brethren, and members of the Synod of Pennsylvania: the subject that has claimed your attention has probably led your thoughts to the condition of that portion of the church of God with which we were formerly ecclesiastically associated as one body. Without indulging the spirit of boasting, we may safely assert, that the Presbyterian Church, in these United States, previous to the commencement of that policy and those measures which eventuated in her violent disruption, was among the most flourishing and honored churches of our land, or of the world. With an apostolic faith, government, and worship, she united intelligence, devoted piety,

and energetic zeal. Deeply lodged in the affections of her children, and richly sharing in the ascension gifts of her exalted head, she was widely spread throughout our own country, and her influence was felt among the distant heathen. We may say of her, in the language of the psalmist: "God had prepared room before it, and caused it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadows of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs to the sea, and her branches to the river." But, alas! how changed! Her present condition, contrasted with what she once was, is calculated to fill the mind of every Christian with unmingled sorrow. It is not my intention to advert to the causes which led to these disastrous results, nor to dwell upon the sad picture, which this church now presents. Not that I think it unimportant to search out these causes, and hold up to the church at large, these results. The hurt of the daughter of Zion will not be healed by covering over the wound, and crying, Peace, peace, when God says there is no peace. But the occasion does not call for it, and time will not permit me to dwell upon this subject. Though I think that that portion of this ruptured church, with which we are connected, stands on the basis of our excellent constitution, and maintains, thus far, the usages and the policy of that church, in her best and brightest days; and, though we may feel conscious, that in the course we have pursued, we have neither violated the principles of eternal justice, nor willingly ruptured the bonds of christian fellowship, still we are to be humbled before God, for those sins which have provoked him so far to forsake his heritage, as to leave it to become the spoil of the violent and contentious. But in addition to this, God, doubtless, has seen much iniquity in our own hearts, and in the hearts of those who act with us, on account of which he has been justly displeased. Every one should search his own heart, humble himself before God, and earnestly pray that he would look down from heaven and behold, and visit his vine, and the vineyard which his own right hand had planted, and the branch he had made strong for himself. Nothing can excuse us from feeling a deep interest in the spiritual prosperity of that portion of our church from which we are separated. We should watch with jealous care our own hearts, lest the spirit of unhallowed rivalry should obtain possession of them. There are multitudes among our brethren, both ministers and others, who do not approve of those violent measures which have torn the church asunder, who regard us with affectionate confidence, and who earnestly pray for our prosperity. They are not, and will not be influenced by that spirit, which would erect an impassable barrier between us, and banish us from their communion and fellowship. It is our duty to reciprocate their kind feelings, and earnestly desire and pray, that that portion of our once united and happy church, with which they and their families are connected, may retain nothing in its spirit or conduct which shall separate them from the blessing of God, and that they may richly share in the effusions of his

Holy Spirit. We should lay aside the spirit of self justification, and be clothed with humility, and charity, and kindness. Let us see to it that our ways please God, and then he will make our enemies to be at peace with us. We are not, I conceive, to be over anxious about an ecclesiastical re-union. How long this separation, and all the evils growing out of it, are to continue, God only knows. But if both portions of the church are deeply humbled before God on account of their sins ; if both are deeply imbued with the spirit of pure religion ; if on both God causes his face to shine, and pours out his Holy Spirit, there will be a union, far closer, far more useful, and more enduring than any produced by a mere ecclesiastical relation.

Brethren, in regard to ourselves, let us labor after the spirit of deep penitence and holy devotedness to God. Let ministers, and elders, and people, here, on this solemn occasion, unite in humbling themselves before him, and in renewing the consecration of themselves to his blessed service. Let them surround the throne of grace, and unitedly seek the blessing of God on their beloved Zion. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock : thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

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## A FRAGMENT

FROM II TIMOTHY 1. 10.

"THE men of this earth carry on their designs and their doings just as if on earth they were to live forever. It is not the greatness or the durability of the objects, which creates and keeps up so mighty a stir among our species ; it is the folly of men that urges them to the pursuit of paltry and evanescent objects—a folly which overlooks the arithmetic of our little years, and has invested them with the characters of eternity—a folly which all the demonstrations of experience have been unable to rectify, and which, after the mighty sweep of countless generations from the face of our world, reigns with unquelled strength over the human heart, and finds the men of the present day as unwise and as infatuated as ever.

Death is a theme of mighty import, and every variety of eloquence has been exhausted on the magnitude of its desolations. There is not a place where human beings congregate together, that does not, in the fleeting history of its inmates, give the lesson of their mortality.

ty. Is it a house? Death enters unceremoniously there, and, with rude hand, tears asunder the dearest of our sympathies. Is it a town? Every year Death breaks up its families, and the society of our early days is fast melting away from us. Is it a church? The aspect of the congregation is changing perpetually; and in a little time another people will enter these walls, and another minister will speak to them.

Our fathers who strutted their little hour on this very theatre, were as active and noisy as we—the loud laugh of festivity was heard in their dwellings, and in the busy occupations of their callings—but where are they now? They are where we shall soon follow them; they have gone to sleep—but it is the sleep of death—their bed is a coffin, in which they are mouldering—the garment which they have thrown aside is their body, which served them through life, but is now lying in loose and scattered fragments in the little earth that they claim.

Death carries to our observation all the immutability of a general law. We cannot reverse the process of nature, nor bid her mighty elements to retire. But is there no higher authority—no power that can grapple with this mighty conqueror, and break his tyranny to pieces? We never saw that being, but the records of past ages inform us of the extraordinary visitor who lighted on these realms, where death had reigned so long in all the triumphs of extended empire. Wonderful enterprise! He came to destroy death! Vast undertaking!

At the coming of that mighty Savior, these heavens broke silence—music was heard from their canopy, and it came from a congregation of living voices which sung the praises of God, and made them fall in articulate language on human ears.

The disciples gave up all for lost when they saw the champion of their hopes made the victim of the very mortality which he promised to destroy. He entered

“That undiscovered country, from whose bourn  
No traveler e’er returns.”

But *he* did. He broke asunder the mighty barriers of the grave; he entered, and he reanimated that body which expired on the cross, and by that most striking of all testimonies, he has given us to know that he hath fought against the law of death, and hath carried it. He has not *abolished* temporal death; it still reigns with unmitigated violence, and sweeps off each successive generation. Death still lays us in the grave, but it cannot chain us there to everlasting forgetfulness: it puts its cold hand on every one of us; but a power higher than death will lift it off, and reanimate these forms. The church yard has been called the land of silence—the Sabbath bell is no longer heard by its slumbering inhabitants. Yet shall the sound of the last trumpet enter the loneliness of their dwelling, and be heard through death’s remotest caverns; and this mortal, these mouldering bones,



these skeletons and fragments of humanity, shall put on glorious immortality.

The Christian alone, in the exercise of strong faith, can bear the appalling contemplation of the decay and dissolution of himself—to think of the time when his now animated frame-work, so sensitive in every part, and so dear to him, shall fall to pieces—when he shall leave to coldness and abandonment, this form now so lovely—the limbs which now step so firmly—the countenance out of which he looks so gracefully, and the tongue with which he speaks so eloquently; when all these shall be reduced to one mass of putrefaction, and shall crumble, like the coffin which incloses him, into dust.

If such are the feelings of the Christian, how should the very sound of such words as *life* and *death*, *judgment* and *immortality*, reduce sinners, who are unreconciled to God, to deep seriousness. Amid the business and pleasures which now tempt you away from eternity, we say to you that the very moment of your final farewell, if you are not previously cut off by death—that moment will come, and old age will come, and the last sickness will come, and the dying bed will come, and the last look you shall ever cast on your relations will come, and the agony of the parting breath will come, and the time that you will be stretched a lifeless corpse before the eyes of your weeping relations will come, and the coffin which is to inclose you will come, and that hour when the company assembles to carry you to the church yard will come, and that moment when you are put into the grave will come, and the throwing in of the earth upon it, all—all will come on every living creature who now hears me. And in a few little years, the minister who now addresses you, and each one who now listens, will be carried to their long home. You may have been careless, or heedless, about these things formerly, but I call upon you now to lay them seriously to heart, and no longer to trifle, or to parley, when the great scenes of life and eternity are set before you. What more shall I say? Shall I carry you beyond the region of sense to the region of faith, and assure you, in the name of him who cannot lie, that when the hour of laying the body in the grave comes, the hour of the spirit's returning to God comes too? Yes, and the day of reckoning will come; and the appearance of the Son of God in heaven, and his holy angels around him, will come; and the opening of the books will come; and the appearance of every one of you before the judgment seat will come; and the solemn passing of the sentence which is to fix you for eternity, will come; and if you refuse to be reconciled to God in the name of Christ, now that he is beseeching you to repent, and if you refuse to turn from the evil of your ways, and to do and to be what your Savior requires you to be and to do, I must tell you what the sentence is:—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." To-day, then, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts, seeing that *now* is the only accepted time that you can count upon, and that now is the day of salvation."